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ABSTRACT

This booklet is one of a series developed by the Northern Colorado Educational Board of Cooperative Services to make available to teachers ideas designed and tested by other teachers. Many of the ideas are from educational journals as well as from the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC). The booklet is divided into eight sections: description, character, plot, dialogue, mood, point of view, humor, and bibliography. Each of the first seven sections contains from ten to fifteen activities with the purposes of the activities explained. Some of the objectives of the activities are to avoid cliches, learn point of view, analyze characters, understand character through phraseology, build plot from theme, build plot from situation, write realistic dialogue, experiment with dialogue, create mood, interpret mood, develop persuasive writing, develop humor, and understand satire. (TS)

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CREATIVE WRITING:

ACTIVITY IDEAS

For Grades 7, 8, & 9

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For

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TO THE TEACHER

It's not easy to be a teacher, to make each day alive and stimulating. It's not easy to select from the multitude of available texts and packaged programs.

We at NCEBOCS want to make your job a little easier. We've talked with teachers and learned that you especially need good ideas for activities, activities that students will enjoy while they learn the skills they need.

Creative Writing: Activity Ideas for Grades 7,8 and 9 is designed to supplement and enhance the existing curriculum. The book is divided into seven sections, each dealing with a different aspect of creative writing. These major divisions are indicated in the upper right hand corner of each page, followed by the more specific "Focus" which enables the teacher to determine which activities will best supplement a particular lesson. The activity follows.

The purpose of the idea book is to present you with suggestions for activities. We hope you will modify some, create extensions for others, and jot down your own. As the book changes and grows, so will its utility and effectiveness for you.

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DESCRIPTION

FOCUS: Auditory Awareness

ACTIVITY: Have students list all of the sound words which denote noises specific "things" make. (Examples: a bus, a baby, a piece of paper, a stone, a jackhammer, a leaf, bacon frying.)

FOCUS: Auditory Awareness

ACTIVITY: Show students a picture (from a magazine, or an acetate, or a slide) and ask them to write about what they hear as they look at it.

FOCUS: Effective Observation

ACTIVITY: Show students a piece of poster board to which you have affixed a variety of pictures, pieces of string, or other small objects. Have them look at it for three minutes and tell them you will ask questions about what they have seen at the end of that time. Turn the poster around and ask your prepared questions, which might concern the number, the color, or the variety of the pictures or objects. Students should assess the degree of their observation and memory by the number of correct responses.

FOCUS: Observation and Interpretation

ACTIVITY: Divide the class into three or four groups. Establish two or three observation points all focusing on the same place. Have each group spend about five minutes at one of these points. Return to the classroom and have students record and compare their observations. Ask if the group can agree on one interpretation as more valid or accurate than another. Or did each observers past experiences or a special knowledge influence his interpretations.

FOCUS: The Observer's Point of View

ACTIVITY: Show a picture to the students and have them write a short descriptive paragraph about what they see. Discuss the different methods of description used by the class members. Why are some more effective than others?

FOCUS: Sensory Awareness

ACTIVITY: Bring to class a variety of objects that represent a broad range of colors, textures, sizes, and shapes. Ask students to touch, taste or smell each and describe the object.

EXTENSION: Experiment by sense-swapping. Have students taste/smell what they would normally only touch, etc. Have them touch with fingers, arms, elbows, faces and toes. Then have them write a description of what they experienced.

FOCUS: Awareness of the Unique

ACTIVITY: Have students each pick a leaf from one tree, examine the petals from one flower, or look at the hair of a blonde or brunette in the classroom. Ask them to write a description that reveals the uniqueness of each object. What words accurately describe the texture, color, or shape.

FOCUS: Descriptive words

ACTIVITY: Ask the students to think of different flavors of ice cream and sherbets they have eaten. List the different kinds on the board. Ask students to think of possible new flavors, writing their suggestions in a second list.

Divide the class into groups of three and have them write an advertisement for the new flavor. Suggest that they use highly descriptive words that will appeal to people's sense of taste and sight, creating a desire for the new product.

Note: Some students might want to try alliteration in their descriptions: crazy cranberry, goofy grape.....

Students may want to illustrate their advertisements and compile them in a little booklet.

FOCUS: Observing and Making Inferences

ACTIVITY: Bring to class an old hat (any kind: dress, engineer, police, straw, etc.). Hold up the hat and let students observe it. You may want to pass it around for closer observation. Discuss what kind of hat it is, who might wear a hat like this, and how it is different from its new condition. Write on the board the words or phrases the students use in describing the old hat.

Continue the discussion with such questions as:

Where do you think this old hat has been?
What kinds of experiences do you think this old hat has had?
What might have caused this hole (or spot, or other sign of wear?)
What experience of the old hat do you think was most exciting? Most enjoyable?

Ask students to pretend the old hat is telling them episodes from its life. Have them listen carefully to their imaginations for the interesting things it has experienced or places it has been.

Allow a few moments for thinking and then let volunteers tell stories of the old hat's life. If many students volunteer, you may want to limit each story to one adventure or episode. Then ask students to write their stories.

FOCUS: Writing a Descriptive Paragraph

ACTIVITY: Choose a day when there is a great deal of contrast between clouds and sky and when winds aloft are moving and changing the formations.

Take your students outside and let them sit or lie down to watch the movements of the clouds. Guide their observation with suggestions to look for variety in color, formations which look like people or animals, and any other interesting shapes. Be sure the students have ample time to watch the clouds, to see them move and change. (You may want to return to the classroom at this point to complete the lesson.)

Ask students to write a description of the clouds. Some may want to write poetry. If so, emphasize word choice rather than form; poetry does not have to follow a set meter or rhyme pattern. Stress the fact that they are trying to draw a picture using words.

Let students paint a water-color picture of the cloud scene they have described. Then using the opaque projector, let volunteers read their descriptive paragraphs or poems and show their pictures.

FOCUS: Observation and Collection

ACTIVITY: Have the students make a small notebook that they can carry in a purse or pocket. Encourage them to carry the notebook with them, and to jot down unusual observations, interesting dialogue, cliches, or any noteworthy incident they see or hear. This notebook can be used as an idea book for later assignments.

FOCUS: Denotation vs. Connotation

ACTIVITY: Discuss the meaning of denotation and connotation. To show how words alter meaning, have students write a paragraph using only denotative words. Have them rewrite the same paragraph using as many connotative words as possible.

FOCUS: Sentence Variety

ACTIVITY: Write a sentence on the board and have students write the same sentence in other ways (inverted order, introductory "there", verbals, etc.)

Example: The little brown dog limped across the yard; Across the yard limped the little brown dog. There has been a little brown dog limping across the yard. Limping across the yard was the little brown dog.

FOCUS: Avoiding cliches

ACTIVITY: Have students make a list of cliches.

Note: Colors are especially conducive to cliched description. Have students finish: "White as", "blue as", etc.

Then ask for fresh new ways of conveying the same idea.

EXTENSION: Cliche reversal. Show students how cliches can become effective when the same words are placed differently. Especially useful for poetry.
Ex. Cool as a cucumber --
cucumber cool -- cool cuke
wise as an owl -- owl wise

FOCUS: Comparison and Contrast

ACTIVITY: Discuss with the class various techniques for making comparisons and contrasts. Then suggest a number of items of varying consistencies and tastes and ask students to describe each for someone who does not know what the item is, what it looks like or how it tastes. Have the students use comparison and contrast in their descriptions.

FOCUS: Active vs Passive Verbs

ACTIVITY: Have students write simple sentences using passive verbs supported by adjectives or adverbs. Then have students write the same sentences using active verbs.

Ex: He smiled painfully/he grimaced.
She walked slowly/she ambled.
She ate like a bird/she picked at her food.

Discuss the effectiveness of the two approaches.

EXTENSION: This is also important in dialogue. Don't describe how a character speaks, make the dialogue tell all.

FOCUS: Description vs Statement

ACTIVITY: Discuss with the class how they can make the reader see, feel, hear and taste. How could they show that it is a windy or sunny day without actually stating that it is? What are the effects of the wind or sun? Instead of saying: "the boy waited impatiently," show his impatience by his actions, expressions, etc. Consider saying, "she is on a diet, so she didn't eat the chocolate candy that was passed to her," or "Susan took the candy plate with a smile, but inwardly she yearned. Chocolate creams, slick and sweet in the centers, fudge centers, thich and creamy beneath their chocolate jackets. Her eyes hungered after the plate as she passed it to her neighbor. No thank you, she said."

CHARACTER

FOCUS: Character Analysis

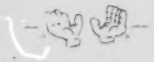
ACTIVITY: Have the student think of a real person. On three consecutive days, instruct them to write the following three descriptions of that person.

1) Physical description (including how he moves, walks, stands.)

2) Personality profile (consider the social, political, educational, economic, cultural, geographic, and religious experiences of the individual.)

3) Dialogue (illustrating how the character reacts to another person.)

On the fourth day, have the students combine the first three papers into a total description.



FOCUS: Emotional Perspective

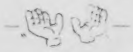
ACTIVITY: Have the students collect close-up pictures of people whose faces express deep emotion. Have them write a first person description of how the person feels.

EXTENSION: Have the students describe the circumstances that led up to this emotional state.

FOCUS: Environmental Perspective

ACTIVITY: Have the students write a paragraph describing a person's room, attempting to give an impression of that person without ever mentioning him.

EXTENSION: Have the students imagine that they are entering an empty house. What does the decor reveal about the people who live there?



FOCUS: Character Development

ACTIVITY: Have the students write a character sketch in which they:

a. Reveal the thoughts of a character. These may be different from what he says aloud about himself or others.

b. Reveal the thoughts of others toward a "main " character. These may be different from things they speak aloud to or about the "main" character.

FOCUS: Development of Character Through Dialogue

ACTIVITY: Have the students choose an every-day situation such as walking through the halls between classes, eating lunch, watching T.V. with the family, or asking someone for a date.

Through the dialogue of two or more people, develop a noticeable trait of one of the characters.

FOCUS: Development of Character Through Dialogue

ACTIVITY: Have the students read dramatic monologues or short stories and plays in which soliloquy or long conversations are used. Discuss how much the various characters reveal of themselves and of their perceptions, attitudes and feelings.

Then ask students to write their own soliloquy, dramatic monologue, or extended dialogue.

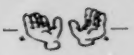
FOCUS: Revealing Character Through Phraseology

ACTIVITY: Take letters written to the lovelorn experts such as Ann Landers or Dear Abby. Have the students consider the following questions:

1) What does the letter reveal of its author?

2) Which words are especially revealing?

EXTENSION: These two questions could be asked about letters to the editor or editorial column.



FOCUS: Personality Profiles

ACTIVITY: Have each student request and receive an interview with an interesting or newsworthy member of the community.
Examples: School board member, legislator, artist, musician, world traveler. Then have each student write a personality profile from the interview notes.

EXTENSION: This can be written as a newspaper feature or a human interest story in a magazine.

FOCUS: Character Development

ACTIVITY: Brainstorm with the class and create five characters. List the characteristics of each on the board.

Have the students assume the following:

1) That they are one of those people outlined on the board.

2) That the rest of those people are relatives.

3) That they have just learned that they have terminal cancer.

4) That they are wealthy.

Then have students write a last will and testament in which they bequeath their fortune to their relatives.

FOCUS: Character Analysis

ACTIVITY: Have the class survey twenty students, using a class developed questionnaire, to determine an "average" student. Include in the questionnaire hobbies, musical preferences, school activities, family members, vocational interests, educational desires. Compile the data, formulate generalities and, using this information, write a current fictitious biography of this "average student."

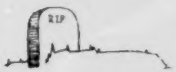
EXTENSION: Repeat the exercise to write a biography of the most unusual student.

PLOT

FOCUS: Plot Analysis

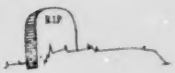
ACTIVITY: Have the students study published stories. Outline the major phases of the plot. Discuss what arrangement is used: cronological, spatial, flash-back, stream of consciousness.

Develop a plot idea by space, time, flashback, or stream of consciousness. Discuss how each method of presentation changes the story and its effect.



FOCUS: Story Line Development

ACTIVITY: Develop a story line within a small group writing team by round-robin additions, each member contributing a sentence or paragraph. Follow a logical, believable sequence.



FOCUS: Building Plot from Theme

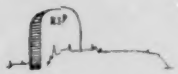
ACITIVIY: Suggest a theme such as "People who are unhappy with themselves find fault with others." Have students outline or suggest a variety of situations which might be used to portray this view.

FOCUS: Plot Analysis

ACTIVITY: Present students with the following:

main character barriers objective

Show them that if the character were to achieve his objective on the first try, there would be no story--an incident, perhaps--but no story. Barriers to achievement create conflict. Have students make three columns on their papers. In column 1 they are to identify a character; in column 2 they are to suggest an objective or goal the character desires to reach or obtain; in column 3 they are to list at least three barriers which could prevent or delay the character from attaining his objective. (Example: 15 year-old boy/ motorcycle/mother's objections, lack of funds, state law prohibiting license for his age.) Students should generate many of these barrier-plots.

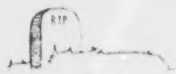


FOCUS: Building Plot from Situation

ACTIVITY: Have the students remember an exciting or emotional experience. Separate the emotional qualities from the experience, and outline the sequence of events. Inject, into the sequence of events, a new character, new emotions, a new theme, or new dialogue. Make this story as emotional and exciting as the original experience.

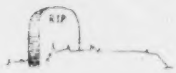
FOCUS: Plot Development

ACTIVITY: Direct the students to assume the identity of a composer, an actress, an artist, a dancer, a computer programmer, a doctor, a bridge builder, a sandhog, or a mountain climber. Have them write an aritcle relating one exciting experience in the life of that character.



FOCUS: Plot Development

ACTIVITY: Have the students imagine two people with opposite personality traits and interests. Give each a name and identify a meeting time and place. Assume that because of their opposing traits they will disagree, and describe what happens during this initial meeting. Then ask what happens as a result of the first encounter. What happens next? What is the logical conclusion? What is a plausible twist ending?

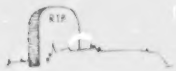


FOCUS: Plot Development

ACTIVITY: Have the student place himself in the center of a significant past, present, or future event and somehow change that event.

FOCUS: Experimentation with Plot Organizations

ACTIVITY: Have the students write a mystery story answering the following questions in order: What? when? how? where? who?
Then change the order of the questions and have them write a story to match the new order. Discuss the differences.



FOCUS: Plot Development

ACTIVITY: Write several conjunctions on the board.
Examples: if, after, because, since, through.
Have the students choose one, and expand it into a story.

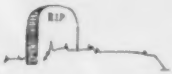
FOCUS: Plot Development

ACTIVITY: Describe a character to the class. Allow student questions. Direct the students to write a story in which the character overcomes, or succumbs to, adversity or a crisis.

FOCUS: Plot Development

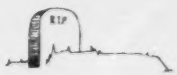
ACTIVITY: Write on the board an incomplete sentence that will stimulate the student's imaginations. Examples: The car is going 80 mph and you realize... At 7 A.M. on graduation day... Four of us went to the drive-in and... Have the students create a one page story from this sentence.

EXTENSION: Show part of a T.V. soap opera and have the students finish the sequence.



FOCUS: Plot Development

ACTIVITY: Read aloud the first or last paragraph of a student's story. Have the class write their own beginning or conclusion. Compare effectiveness and techniques. Point out the endless variety possible from one idea.

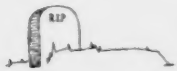


FOCUS: Plot Development

ACTIVITY: Display 10-15 intriguing pictures from several types of magazines. Tell the students that the pictures contain clues, and have each student write a mystery story from these clues.

FOCUS: Plot Development

ACTIVITY: Have the students record a dream in detail, paying particular attention to the setting. Was the dream in color? What emotions were involved? Was anything in the dream surprising? Was the student in the dream?



FOCUS: Plot Development

ACTIVITY: Show a picture to the class. Ask them to describe what events led to the situation in the picture. What will happen next?

DIALOGUE

FOCUS: Use of Dialogue for Character Development

ACTIVITY: Have the students write a dialogue between two or more people as they plan a party, play, or other activity. Emphasize particular traits in the characters. For example: submissiveness, wall-flower, life-of-the-party, self-centered, etc.

FOCUS: The Difference between Prose and Dialogue

ACTIVITY: Have students write a description of an incident first in prose and then in dialogue.

Suggested topics:

1) The first five minutes of a blind date.

2) Two boys in the locker room after losing (or winning) a game.

3) A teenager coming home late and confronting his/her parent.

FOCUS: Experimentation with Dialogue

ACTIVITY: Have the students write a dialogue between two people holding opposing views on a controversial subject such as abortion, drug reform, capital punishment, nuclear testing or some local concern.

EXTENSION: Have the students write a persuasive article in journalistic style for each position. Compare the techniques for effectiveness.

FOCUS: Evaluating Dialogue for Realism

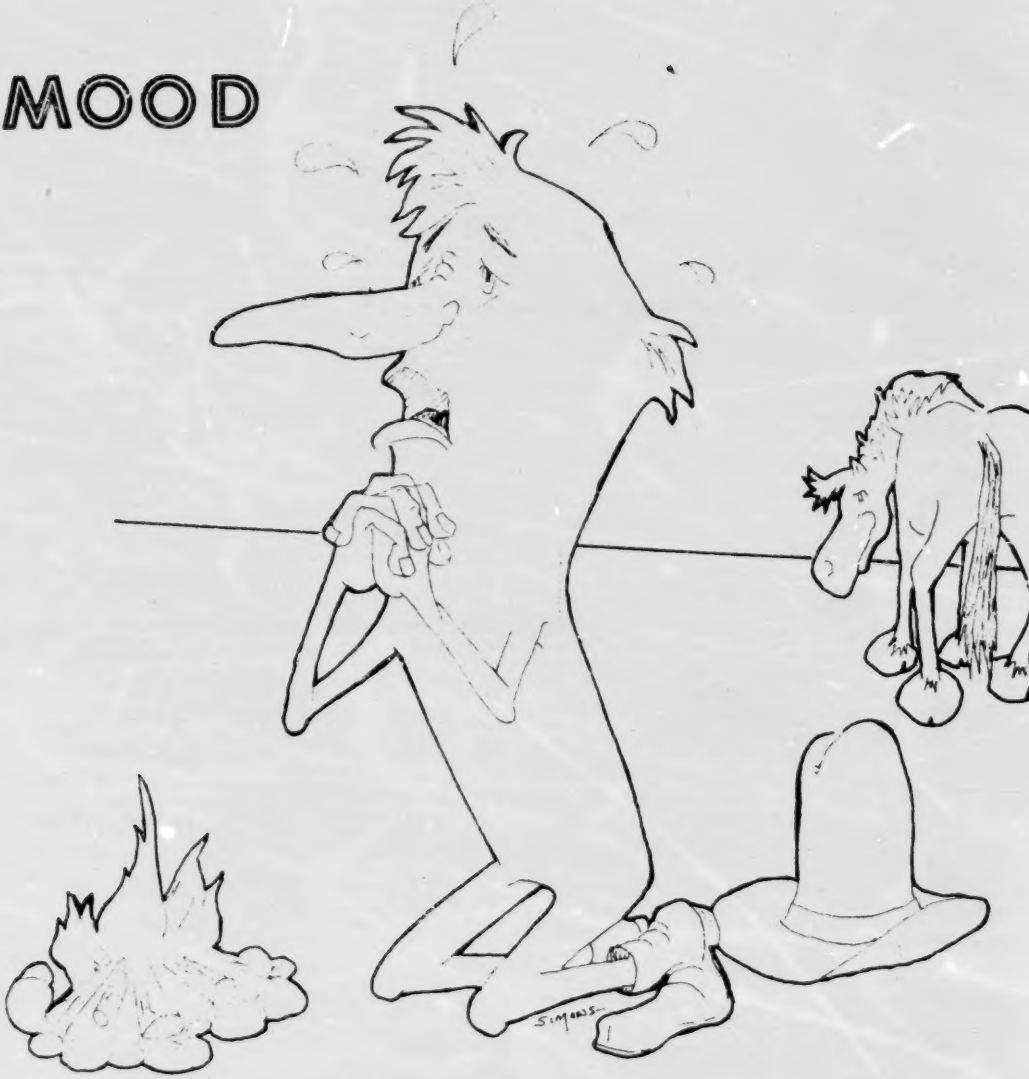
ACTIVITY: Take any dialogue written by students (even if a brief part of a larger paper) Have students take character parts and read the dialogue aloud. Does the language fit the character? Are the words, pauses, and punctuation realistic?

FOCUS: Writing Realistic Dialogue

ACTIVITY: Have students write a dialogue that will reveal where a person is from or how old he is.

Examples: Boston, Massachusetts
Long Island, New York
Atlanta, Georgia
Age 5
Age 70

MOOD



FOCUS: Analysis of Mood

ACTIVITY: Discuss with students the books, stories, and plays they have read and the films and television shows they have seen to determine the types of moods portrayed. Ask them to identify the ways in which an author portrays mood. (Possibly via setting, the character's actions and speech, descriptions, the theme, and plot.)

FOCUS: Use of Character to Create Mood

ACTIVITY: Have students brainstorm to compile a list of human emotions. From this list they are to select several which they will develop in two ways. First, they will write a short sketch in which they show one character experiencing the emotion. Next, they will write a piece which evokes that same emotion in a reader. (Example: A character in an incident is angry because his luggage has been stolen. An account of a grave injustice might arouse anger in a reader.)

FOCUS: Use of Setting to Create Mood

ACTIVITY: Have students determine the settings with which they are familiar. Ask them to select a setting from their own experience or to choose one from a list for each of the three types of setting:

1) Time (of day, week, month, year)
   Examples: breakfast, picnic in May, New Year's Eve, 5:00 a.m., dusk, summer, the first week of school.

2) Place
   Examples: antebellum home in Mississippi, Waikiki, Paris, Coral Gables, University of Florida, home, amusement park.

3) Era
   Examples: The Inquisition, the Crusades, the Jazz Age, the Victorian Era.

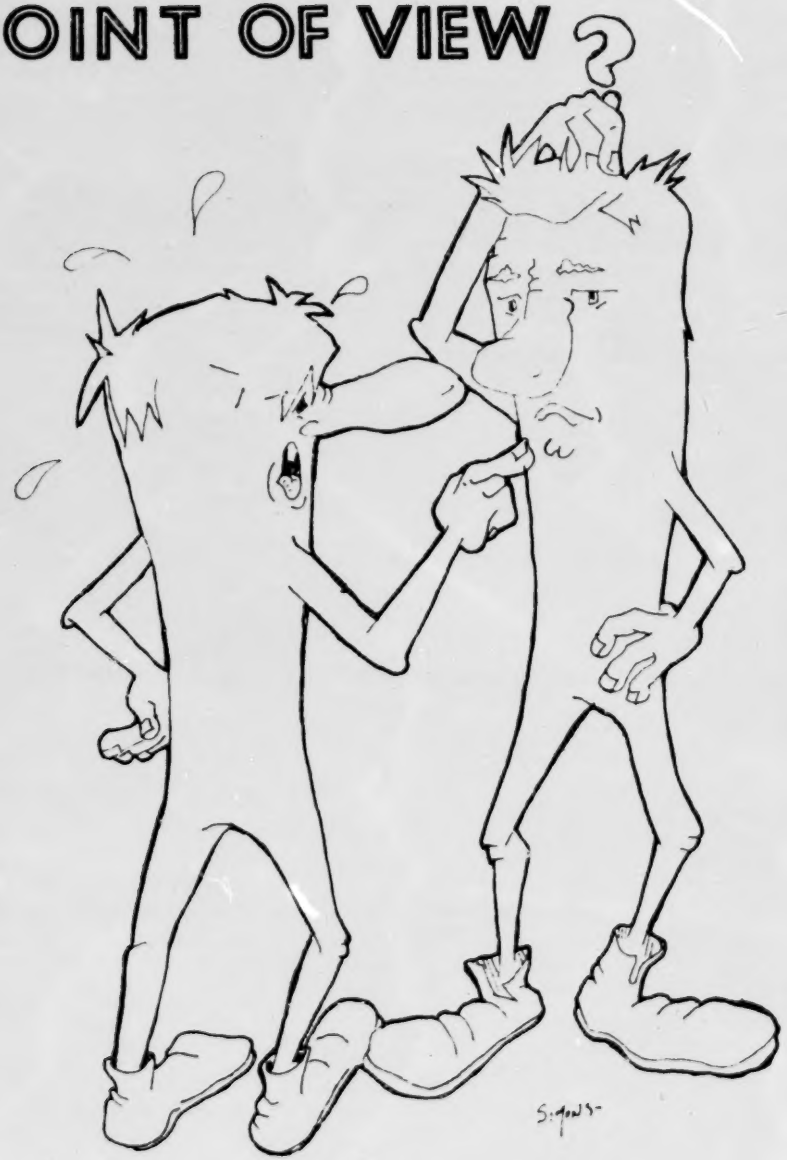
Students are to write a sketch in which they evoke in the reader the feeling of the particular time, place, and era they have selected.

FOCUS: Interpretive Mood Writing

ACTIVITY: Bring to class music and/or paintings that suggest distinct moods. Use these to stimulate in-class writing.

EXTENSION: The music can also be used to stimulate stream of consciousness.

POINT OF VIEW



FOCUS: Development of Point of View

ACTIVITY: Have students choose a topic or event and select from it the details which most effectively evoke a particular response in the reader.

For example, assume that your class is describing a student government meeting they have attended. Here are various manners of expression your students might experiment with:

1. Satire: You want to indicate that this is a stupid council. There is something synthetic, pretentious, and painfully foolish about it.

2. Humor: You want to show the ludicrous elements of the meeting-- the skinny boy trying to be dignified, members unfamiliar with parliamentary procedure, and the funny kinds of things that can come up for discussion.

3. Compassion: You want to illustrate the fundamental goodness of the group, the good will, and the real striving, and the real failure of the striving.

4. Ridicule: You want to express the stupidity of simpleminded activity in the group. Comparison is made with a "higher" level of government in order to make the group look small and cheap.

5. Dispassionate Objectivity: You want to present an almost photographic report of the scene as you objectively observed it.

FOCUS: "I" and "you" Messages in Persuasive Writing.

ACTIVITIES: Have the students try to win over the reader by writing a persuasive essay using "I" and "My" statements. Do not directly address the reader. Then have the students try to win over the reader using "You" and "Your" statements.

Which essay is more persuasive? What elements besides direct and indirect address determine effectiveness in persuasive writing?

FOCUS: Development of Point of View

ACTIVITY: Have the students select from the newspaper an honored person, an accident victim, a burglary suspect, or a hero. Have them write an account of the story from the viewpoint of that person.

FOCUS: Writing for a Particular Audience

ACTIVITY: Have students identify five different audiences. Example: young children, the military, the P.T.A., the general public. Have them write a short description of the same event for each of these audiences.

FOCUS: Development of Persuasive Writing

ACTIVITY: Write two or three brief quotations on the board. Have students choose one and have them write an argument for or against the idea, explaining why they agree or disagree. Stress the value of good argument and if possible have them give examples from their own experience.

FOCUS: The Influence of Experience and Environment on Point of View

ACTIVITY: Have your students describe the same object, picture, or activity from the point-of-view of a child, an old man or woman, or a teenager. Have them do the same from the point-of-view of someone wealthy, middle class, or poor; or someone angry, happy or sad.

FOCUS: Experimentation with Point of View

ACTIVITY: Have the students assume the identity of a fairy tale character such as Red Riding Hood, Baby Bear, Cinderella, Peter Cottontail, etc. and write an autobiographical anecdote of his/her famous escapade.

FOCUS: First Person vs Omniscient Third Person

ACTIVITY: Have the student write a brief description or character sketch from different points of view.

Discuss the differences between the two points of view. When would first person be most effective? When would third person be most effective?

FOCUS: Developing Awareness of Different Points of View

ACTIVITY: Have the students write three complete characterizations of themselves from the standpoint of:

a) someone who hates you.

b) someone who loves you.

c) someone who is indifferent.

FOCUS: Development of Point of View

ACTIVITY: Have students create a new commercial product and develop a campaign to introduce it. Include the copy and the radio and television spot commercials. Have each student present their product to the class.

FOCUS: Objective vs subjective writing

ACTIVITY: Have students describe a situation objectively, remaining detached and disinterested. Then have students describe the same situation from a subjective, emotional, and involved point of view. Discuss the relative value of objective vs subjective writing for particular purposes.

HUMOR

FOCUS: Development of Humor

ACTIVITY: Have the students try to imagine their surroundings from the viewpoint of something other than a human. Have them write what a specific part of the world would look like to that creature.

Example: Imagine a kitchen from a roach's view. How would it see appliances, sinks, or refrigerator? What would common food look like?
Imagine a horse with a 450 lb. woman on his back, trying to get back to the stable for dinner. Describe how you would feel if you were the horse.

FOCUS: Development of Humor

ACTIVITY: Have your class take a common, everyday object from their desks or notebooks. Direct them to write a paragraph about the object, but to give it some extra-ordinary characteristic or power.

Example: A pencil could be the one that George Washington had when he crossed the Delaware, etc.

FOCUS: Development of Humor

ACTIVITY: Have the students imagine that they are an object on display. For example: a painting, a piece of sculpture, a racing car or a stuffed buffalo. Have them write a reaction to the people who would be looking at them.

FOCUS: Combining Imagination and Logic to Produce Humor

ACTIVITY: Have the students respond with a logical answer to a "What if" question given by the teacher or another student. The answers should make sense in context.

Example: What if grass grew indoors?
Response: You would have to mow the living room, etc.

FOCUS: Development of Humor Through Alternate Language or Writing Styles

ACTIVITY: Have the students re-write a fairy tale, a portion of Shakespeare, or a part of the Bible using today's language.

Note: see the example on the following page.

EXTENSION: Rewrite a fairy tale, a portion of Shakespeare or a part of the Bible using different genres. Example: news articles, letters, poems, plays.

THE TRAGEDY OF HUMPTIUS DUMPTIUS

Dramatis Personae

Humptius Dumptius: a good egg
The King: a ruling monarch
The King's Men: a motley crew

Act First
Scene I (Enter Humptius)

Humptius: Forsooth. Thinks me I see a wall worthy of sitting down upon. Aye, this wall doth be worthy of sitting. Ah, so fair a day is this...such a sky; 'tis deeper blue than the wing of yon bluebird. The clouds provoke love in the depths of me; the---Oops! Methinks I might loseth my footing upon this stone construction - 'Twould be a distasteful----whoops!

(Exit Humptius off Wall)

(Loud crack is heard.)

Enter King, followed by King's Men
(Flourish)

King: Halt! This be a pretty spot for the banquet. Prepare for the feast... bring forth the bundle of victuals prepared for the hunt... you there, minstrel, play music, entertain. All make merry! The hunt has been heavy with success.

(eyes fall upon Humptius)

King: Stop! Cease all jubilance! Who be yon fellow not amaking merry? You, sirrah, I proclaim that we shall make merry! Whil'st we be happy thou art sorely despondent in appearance.

Zounds! He is abroken up! Heartily there, men...reinstate him to his former stature...reaffix his accoutrements!

(Men Attempt King's Bidding)

King: Ah, good thee friends...it is to no avail that we hearken to raise the spirit of this one. Truly, his soul has departed from his fellow's presence. This was the noblest peasant of them all... his life was gentle and all the elements so mixed in him that all Nature might stand and say to the world: "This was a good egg."

Exuent All

FOCUS: Satire

ACTIVITY: Have the class view the television programs, All in the Family, or Sanford and Son. Using the same characters, write and present a teleplay that establishes the same type of humor.

FOCUS: The Elements of Humor

ACTIVITY: Have students bring to class examples of humor--short stories, anecdotes, cartoons, outlines of television programs. Discuss in small groups what constitutes humor, listing and defining the elements and different types of humor. Compose a class list from the group lists and share in a class session that brings out examples of humor for future writing reference.

FOCUS: The Relationship Between Satire and Humor

ACTIVITY: Have students bring examples of satire or satirical comment to class. Discuss the elements of satire. Then have them write a complaint or protest article with a humorous or tongue-in-cheek attitude.

FOCUS: The Humorous Myth

ACTIVITY: Have students create their own myths by answering such questions as:

Why do toads have warty bodies?
How did the snake lose its legs?

Have the class brainstorm answers to these questions. Then have them create their own myths by answering a new question.

EXTENSION: This could be used for serious writing by posing serious questions.

FOCUS: Analysis and Writing of Humor

ACTIVITY: Select a personal comic episode and determine the type of humor displayed. Outline the episode, then write the anecdote and record it for a class sharing day.

FOCUS: Humor in Action

ACTIVITY: Observe a bowling team, tennis players, a football squad, a baseball team, a basketball squad, a musical group, dancers, restaurant diners, sports, spectators, etc. Look for deliveries, running styles, facial expressions or mannerisms that are comical. Write a short article, omitting all names or specific identifications, that is humorous yet clings to the realities of people being unconsciously funny.

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